

Bradley Adamant Against China War

By Marquis Childs

WHEN HE WAS campaigning for the Republican nomination for President, Sen. Robert A. Taft a year ago made an important speech on foreign policy at Seattle, Wash. He urged that the Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek on the island of Formosa be given the power to assault the mainland of China held by the Communists.

That proposal caused something of a political uproar in Washington. Sen. John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.) said it would mean all-out war on the Chinese mainland, with the United States in the war. Sen. Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.) said such a move would mean a "Taft war" in China, this being a reference to Taft's denunciation of the "Truman war" in Korea.

The more ardent advocates of the Nationalists immediately seconded the Taft proposal. But they pointed out that such a move could be made only with the help of the American Navy and American air power.

In the same talk at Seattle Taft declared he had no confidence in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said if he were President he would remove them. This is interesting in view of the speculation over President Eisenhower's decision on Formosa and how that decision was reached.

IT HAS BEEN reported that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were not consulted on the decision to remove the Seventh Fleet from the Straits of Formosa. This is not strictly accurate. The sequence of events was as follows:

In an early stage of the preparation of the State of the Union message the Joint Chiefs were told that such a move was being considered.

But President Eisenhower indicated he would reject it. Paragraphs drafted for inclusion in the message on the subject were torn up and thrown in the wastebasket.

This was the last the Joint Chiefs heard of the matter. Officially they knew nothing more about it until they heard the President read the paragraph in his speech that drew headlines around the world.

The leak three days in advance of the message itself had, of course, made plain what was coming. Significantly, two top military men, both long advocates of a strong policy in Asia, were called upon to support the move. They were Admiral William D. Leahy



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and Gen. Douglas MacArthur, both retired but both extremely influential. It was the first public statement Leahy had made in a long time.

At the time of the hearings into MacArthur's dismissal by President Truman, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Omar N. Bradley, testified that for the United States to become involved militarily in China would be "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time." His testimony angered MacArthur's friends and those who favored a dynamic policy in Asia.

The decision on Formosa, taken without the prior knowledge of the JCS, suggests an interesting possibility. In setting policy President Eisenhower may go around them to rely on other military advisers. One of these is Admiral Arthur W. Radford, the Navy's commander in chief in the Pacific area.

BRADLEY IS DUE for retirement in August. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, chief of staff of the Air Force, and Gen. J. Lawton Collins, chief of staff of the Army, also are due to step out in a few months. Current speculation in the Pentagon is that Radford will be groomed to succeed Bradley as his association with the new President becomes closer and closer. He could assume the chairmanship even though Admiral William N. Fechteler continues to be a member of the JCS as chief of staff of the Navy.

Repeatedly, General Bradley has said that the Joint Chiefs do not set policy. They report on what can or cannot, by their estimates, be done militarily. But major decisions on a high political level must be made by the President, his principal advisers in Congress, and the Cabinet.

For this attitude Bradley has often been berated. He has been criticized for "going along" with the economy budget of 13 billion dollars fixed by former Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson. Bradley's reply has been that for the chairman and the Joint Chiefs to resign over policy decisions would inevitably put them into politics on issues arising from month to month. This the chairman of the JCS has earnestly tried to avoid.

Yet, as Bradley has made clear in testimony, his feeling is deep on the dangers of American involvement in a war on the mainland of China. In the closing months of his military career to watch a drift in that direction would be for Bradley a painful experience.